Key Information

- Short day breeder (come into heat in autumn as the day length decreases)
- Length of oestrus = 17 day cycle
- Duration of oestrus = 36 hours
- Length of gestation = 147 days or 5 months
- Can birth singles, twins or triplets
- Weight at birth = between 3 and 5kg

Mountain Hill Vs Lowland Production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mountain Hill</th>
<th>Lowland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extensive</td>
<td>Intensive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low produce targets</td>
<td>High produce targets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rough grazing</td>
<td>Rotational grazing</td>
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<tr>
<td>High mortality</td>
<td>Low mortality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breeds for harsh conditions</td>
<td>Large, muscular breeds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blackface mountain</td>
<td>Suffolk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wicklow Cheviot</td>
<td>Texel</td>
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Breeding Strategy

- Purebred ewe x purebred ram for both mountain hill + lowland
- Mountain ewes = 1 lamb due to harsh conditions, poorer feed
- Used as replacements or sold for meat
- These ewes are sold to lowland farmers as they get older
- Called cast ewes, have good mothering ability
- Fertility has declined but high plane of nutrition helps
- Crossed with a prolific breed once sold to lowland production
● This uses hybrid vigour; offspring have hardiness, good mothers, good milk, prolificacy

**Ram Selection**

“Ram is half the flock”

● Spreads his genes over greater proportion of offspring
● Looks after quality (growth rates, carcass quality, conformation)
● Ewe looks after litter size

**Easter market**

● Suffolk ram
● Fastest growth rates
● Conformation

**Mid-season**

● Texel ram
● Higher carcass quality
● Greater kill-out %
● Lose condition at mating
● Sound feet and legs
● Or Charolaise ram on first timers
● Smaller lambs

All rams are pedigree and performance tested

**Flushing**

● High plane of nutrition
● Moved from low plane to high plane of nutrition
● Prior to mating
● Can be done by high stocking rate then 3 weeks before mating reduce the stocking rate
● Increases ovulation rates
● Increases conception rates
● Better implantation of embryo to uterine wall
● More regular oestrous cycles
● Continues 4 weeks after mating so embryos develop properly

**Synchronised Breeding**

**Ram effect**

● Sudden introduction
● Encourages ewes into oestrus and to start cycling
● Rams produce pheromones which stimulates oestrus
● Have to be separated 6 weeks before mating

**Sponging**

● Prevent prolonged lambing season
● Progesterone soaked sponges inserted into the birth canal
● Removed after 12 days
● Ewes come into heat 2 days later
● Reduced lamb to ewe ratio from 1:40 to 1:10

**Heat Detection**

● Calculate lambing dates
● Identify repeats
● Raddle with coloured crayon
● Colour changed every 17 days

**Breeding Out Of Season**

● Aiming for early lambs for the Easter market
● Mated in early July
● Sponging is used
● Ewes are injected with PMSG
Steaming Up

- Last 6 week of pregnancy
- As in these weeks 75% of foetal growth occurs
- Prevents twin lamb disease or pregnancy toxaemia
- Fed 100g of concentrates
- Increased to 500g for singles
- Increased to 750g for twins

Scanning

- 80 days after mating
- Identifies barren ewes
- Determines singles or twins which determines feeding
- Ewes are separated into groups of those carrying singles or twins

Lambing

- Ewes are vaccinated for clostridia diseases 4 weeks before lambing
- Treat ewes for footrot
- Takes place indoors
- Revive chilled lambs using infrared lamp
- If severe chill in lambs, inject with glucose
- Lambs stay with ewes for bonding

Fostering

Cover lamb in birth fluids from host ewe

- Tie its feet
- Place in front of ewe
- Ewe will lick it clean thinking its own lamb therefore bonding

Fostering Crate
● Prevents ewe from hurting lamp
● Allows foster lamb to feed
● Ewe will accept the lamb

Introducing a dog
● Ewe will become protective

**Post Lambing**

● High plane of nutrition to ensure good milk production
● Mineral lick to prevent milk fever and grass tetany
● Diet includes colostrum, milk, hay, concentrates and grass
● Rotationally grazed on good pasture
● Creep feeding
● Slaughter weight = 34-40kg
● Weaning in June and July
● Ewes are put onto bare pasture and dried off before flushing

**General Husbandry**

Castration
● Takes place in the first few days using an elasticator or burdizzo

Dipping
● Prevents fly strike in summer, mange mite in winter

Dosing
● For stomach worms, liver fluke and other parasites

Docking
● Removal of tail, prevents build-up of faeces

Dagging
● Removal of wool around tail to prevent fly strike

Footbath
● Prevents footrot
- Consists of copper sulphate or formalin

Foot trimming and paring
- Prevents lameness

Shearing
- Occurs in June
- Prevents overheating

Wool
- It is a protein fibre
- Grows from follicles on sheep’s skin
- Have both hair and wool fibres
- Ratio of hair to wool fibres varies between breeds
- Merino sheep have the finest wool; wool: hair = 25:1
- Most Irish breeds; wool: hair = 8:1